

Bureau of Plant Industry

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BRIDGE GRAFTING FOR TREES INJURED BY RABBITS AND MICE

Trees which have been girdled by mice or rabbits may be successfully treated and saved by methods of "bridge grafting". While bridge grafting is more frequently and successfully utilized in the treatment of girdled apple and pear trees, it may also succeed with plum, cherry and peach, but in the case of peach trees, which come into bearing quickly, replacement is recommended rather than grafting, should serious girdling occur.

Where very young or small trees of any kind have been girdled it is usually more desirable to replace them immediately, than to attempt bridge grafting.

METHOD OF PROCEDURE:—Trim the rough bark at the edges of the wound to the live tissue. It is well to cover the exposed wood with melted wax to keep it from drying out. Cut scions the size of a lead pencil, or slightly larger, from the trees to be grafted, and bevel or cut slantingly an inch or more at each end, leaving the scions about an inch longer than the width of the girdled strip. Slit the bark above and below, and insert the beveled ends of the scion with the cut faced inwardly, and tack the ends with a very small brad, taking care that they are not split and that the face of the bevel fits snugly against the stem of the tree under the bark. Then bind them in place, or preferably coat the cut and exposed ends of the bark and scion with grafting wax.

Most important throughout the operation remember that the cambium or sap-bearing layer of the tree and scion come in close contact. In the absence of wax, clay has been used as a binder, held in place for a short time with cloth until a union is effected.

In a girdled tree the scions should be placed not more than an inch apart, depending on the circumference of the injured tree. If the union is successful the scions will grow rapidly, and finally cover the entire injured area, and the tree will continue to thrive.

GRAFTING WAX can be made by melting four parts by weight of rosin, two parts of beeswax, and one part of tallow. When cooled it should be rapidly pulled, much as taffy is pulled, and finally when cold enough rolled into sticks about an inch and one-half in diameter and six to eight inches long. These sticks can be kept indefinitely in a vessel of water. The wax can be made softer or harder for cold or warm weather, depending upon a slight variation in the amount of tallow used.

